

## Edomites Study Notes

Gen 33:1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants.

Gen 33:2 And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all.

Gen 33:3 He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

Gen 33:4 But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

Gen 33:5 And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, "Who are these with you?" Jacob said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant."

Gen 33:6 Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down.

Gen 33:7 Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down.

Gen 33:8 Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company that I met?" Jacob answered, "To find favor in the sight of my lord."

Gen 33:9 But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."

Gen 33:10 Jacob said, "No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me.

Gen 33:11 Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." Thus he urged him, and he took it.

- After Jacob's scheme to steal the inheritance from his brother, he departs to the east and eventually finds Rachel in Haran where his mother's kindred live.
- Some 14 years later, he departs Laban's house and returns to his own country after a prompt from the Lord (and having "outstayed his welcome" with Laban's family).
- As shown above, the first encounter with Esau was tense as Jacob did not know how his brother would react upon their reunion.

## 1. Shared Ancestry (Brother Nations)

The foundation of their relationship begins with two brothers:

- Jacob → father of Israel (Israelites)
- Esau → father of Edom (Edomites)

Key passage:

- **Genesis 25:23** – God tells their mother (Rebekah) that *“two nations are in your womb.”*

Esau is later called **Edom** (Genesis 25:30), and his descendants become the Edomites.

So, the Edomites and Israelites are literally **brother nations**, descending from twin brothers.

## 2. Early Tension Between Jacob and Esau

Their personal conflict sets the tone:

- Jacob acquires Esau’s birthright (Genesis 25:29–34)
- Jacob receives the blessing intended for Esau (Genesis 27)

Although they reconcile personally (Genesis 33), the tension carries into their descendants.

## 3. Geography and Identity

- **Edomites** settle in **Mount Seir**, south of the Dead Sea (Genesis 36:8)
- **Israelites** settle in Canaan

Edom becomes a defined nation with kings even before Israel (Genesis 36:31).

## 4. Conflict During the Exodus

One of the earliest national conflicts:

- **Numbers 20:14–21** – Israel asks to pass through Edom peacefully
- Edom **refuses and comes out with force**

Despite being “brothers,” Edom denies Israel passage, forcing Israel to go around.

## 5. God’s Command: Limited Restraint

Even with tension, God reminds Israel of their kinship:

- **Deuteronomy 23:7** – *“You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother.”*

This shows:

- A recognition of shared bloodline

- A limit on hostility

## 6. Ongoing Wars and Subjugation

Conflict escalates during the monarchy:

- David defeats Edom (2 Samuel 8:13–14)
- Edom becomes subject to Israel

Later:

- Edom revolts under Jehoram (2 Kings 8:20–22)

The relationship shifts between **subjugation and rebellion**.

## 7. Betrayal During Judah's Fall

One of the most serious accusations against Edom:

- During the **Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem (586 BC)**, Edom:
  - Rejoices over Judah's downfall
  - Possibly helps enemies capture fugitives

Key passages:

- Psalm 137:7 – Edom says, *"Raze it!"*
- Obadiah 10–14 – condemns Edom for violence against "your brother Jacob"

## 8. Prophetic Judgment Against Edom

Because of this betrayal, many prophets pronounce judgment:

- **Obadiah** – entirely focused on Edom's destruction
- **Isaiah 34** – Edom as a symbol of divine judgment
- **Ezekiel 35** – condemns Edom's perpetual hatred

Edom becomes:

A symbol of **hostility toward God's people**

## 9. Later History (Herodian Connection)

By New Testament times:

- Edomites (called **Idumeans**) are absorbed into Judea
- Herod the Great is of Edomite descent

Num 20:14 Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom: "Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that we have met:

Num 20:15 how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time. And the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our fathers.

Num 20:16 And when we cried to the LORD, he heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. And here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory.

Num 20:17 Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or vineyard, or drink water from a well. We will go along the King's Highway. We will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory."

Num 20:18 But Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through, lest I come out with the sword against you."

Num 20:19 And the people of Israel said to him, "We will go up by the highway, and if we drink of your water, I and my livestock, then I will pay for it. Let me only pass through on foot, nothing more."

Num 20:20 But he said, "You shall not pass through." And Edom came out against them with a large army and with a strong force.

Num 20:21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory, so Israel turned away from him.

- During the Exodus, the Israelites send messengers to request passage through the territory of their "cousins" the Edomites even offering to pay for supplies if needed and are refused under threat of military force.
- Note: The Edomites have already adopted a monarchy (king) and are an established nation at the time of Israel returning from Egypt.
- Esau began his lineage with a Hittite wife. Similar to Cain, the scriptures describe them as "taking a wife" where Isaac and Jacob were "given wives".

Oba 1:10 Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.

Oba 1:11 On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them.

Oba 1:12 But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; do not boast in the day of distress.

Oba 1:13 Do not enter the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; do not gloat over his disaster in the day of his calamity; do not loot his wealth in the day of his calamity.

Oba 1:14 Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off his fugitives; do not hand over his survivors in the day of distress.

- Eventually, prophetic condemnation is levied against Edom for their rejoicing over their “brother’s” calamity during the Babylonian invasion.
- Often the Edomites would capitalize on invasions by other nations into Israel as scavengers after the fact. They might not participate in open conflict, but would reap the spoils after.

Deu 23:7 “You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a sojourner in his land.

- Israel was forbidden by law to hate the Edomite because of their close lineage.